

## What is *Tchitreia melampyra* Hartlaub, 1857?

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In the second volume of his *Systema Avium Æthiopicarum*, 1930, p. 434, Mr. W. L. Sclater used the name *Tchitreia melampyra* Hartlaub<sup>1</sup> for a species of paradise flycatcher which in western Africa, from the Cameroon to northern Angola, is widely sympatric with *Terpsiphone viridis* (P. L. S. Müller). He further explained that *T. rufocinerea* Cabanis<sup>2</sup> might well be synonymous with *melampyra*.

As described by Cabanis, *T. rufocinerea* of the Portuguese Congo differs from the race of *T. viridis* occupying the Gaboon and Portuguese Congo coastlands in having the under tail-coverts rufous instead of gray and in lacking any well-developed crest of feathers on the occiput.

David Bannerman and Claude Grant continued to use the specific name *melampyra* in preference to *rufocinerea* and claimed that Hartlaub's type of *melampyra* was preserved in the British Museum. Many years ago, however, Professor Erwin Stresemann and I had studied the original description of *melampyra* by Hartlaub and decided that it would apply much better to a rather nondescript male of some form of *T. viridis* than to the bird subsequently named *rufocinerea*. The type of the latter is still preserved in Berlin.

The description of *melampyra* was published in Latin, with dimensions in old French inches. Translated into English it would read: "Above bright rufous; head, neck, and breast steely-black; abdomen lighter gray; no white band on the wing; primaries grayish on their outer margins; outer tertials rufous on outer part, those nearest the back wholly rufous; scapulars and lesser wing-coverts wholly rufous; under wing-coverts gray; beak and feet blackish."

The old French inch was equivalent to 27 mm. So the measurements given would mean: "Total length approximately 222.7 mm., beak (exposed culmen) 12.4 mm., wing 76.5 mm., median rectrices 135 mm., lateral rectrices 65.2 mm."

All the above would fit a sub-adult male of *T. viridis* with middle tail-quills not greatly prolonged. The blackness of the breast is suggestive, and there was no mention of rufous under tail-coverts. The sex was given as female, plainly in error. Thus I have always used the name *rufocinerea* as did Reichenow and Stresemann, and not *melampyra*, for the bird with rufous coverts beneath the tail and shorter feathers on the crown<sup>3</sup>.

Quite recently my decision in this case was again criticized<sup>4</sup>, so I asked my friends J. D. Macdonald and C. W. Mackworth-Praed to consult the original description of *melampyra* and compare it with the supposed type in the British Museum. This they kindly did, and both agreed that the London specimen cannot really be the type, for its total length is only about 183 mm., and its tail of quite a different shape from that indicated for *melampyra*. The under wing-coverts are brown, not gray; and the under tail-coverts rufous-brown. In short, the London specimen agrees with *rufocinerea* but does not conform to the description of *melampyra*. In the British Museum Register, I am further informed, the words "type of the species" seem to have been added in a different hand, well after the original entry.

This settles the question in favour of my use of *Terpsiphone rufocinerea* Cabanis. But another awkward query may now be raised: should not the name *melampyra* Hartlaub of 1857 replace *speciosa* Cassin<sup>5</sup> for the race of *T. viridis* that ranges so widely from the coastal area of the Gaboon all across the forest belt of Lower Guinea?

Inasmuch as the original description of *melampyra* gave no distinctive markings such as characterise the several races of *T. viridis*, I feel that we shall do well to discard that name altogether as indeterminate, rather than to cause further confusion amid the names of these paradise flycatchers.

Cassin's description of *speciosa* was much more satisfactory, since he mentioned a white stripe on the wing, formed by the white edgings of greater wing-coverts and some secondaries. The sex of his type was not mentioned; but it was plainly a rufous-backed male, with upper tail-coverts glossy black, under tail-coverts blackish gray, and with median rectrices 63.5 mm. longer than the others, rufous with some brownish black along shafts and at tips.

On the same page, lower down, Cassin gave a new name, *duchailui*, to another colour-phase of this same race and from the same locality, mistaking a white-backed adult male with long white median rectrices for a female. From the Camma River Cassin also had had paradise flycatchers with rufous under tail-coverts and no white on the wing, but he too believed these had been named *melampyra* by Hartlaub. So the error began very early. It is amply proved that *T. viridis* and *T. rufocinerea* do live together along the Gaboon coast.

#### References:

- <sup>1</sup> *Tchitrea melampyra* Verreaux, in Hartlaub, 'Syst. Orn. Westafr.', 1857, p. 90 (type from Gaboon).
- <sup>2</sup> *Terpsiphone rufocinerea* Cabanis, 1875, Journ. f. Ornith., p. 236 (type from Chinchoxo, Portuguese Congo).
- <sup>3</sup> See Chapin, 1948, Evolution, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 113-118, 124-126; 1953, Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., Vol. 75 A, pp. 710-715.
- <sup>4</sup> Rand, Friedmann, and Traylor, 1959, 'Birds from Gabon and Moyen Congo', Fieldiana: Zoology, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 358-361.
- <sup>5</sup> *Muscipeta speciosa* Cassin, 1859, Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Philadelphia, p. 48 (type from Camma River, Gaboon).

## Some notes from Northern Rhodesia

by C. W. BENSON

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All specimens mentioned in the following notes are now in the National Museum, Bulawayo, unless otherwise indicated.

(1) A specimen of *Accipiter r. rufiventris* Smith was collected by J. Gooouws in riparian forest at Kitwe in February, 1959. It is mainly in immature plumage, but with the throat rich rufous. The wing measures 252 mm., and so it is evidently a female. M. P. Stuart Irwin has compared it with Southern Rhodesian specimens, and agrees with the identification. This is the first record of this species from Northern Rhodesia.

(2) A female specimen of *Falco fasciinucha* Reichenow & Neumann was collected by me on a rocky hill in the Serenje District at 13° 10' S., 31° 03' E., on 11th October, 1960. It is in adult dress; rump and lower back very pale, contrasting with the dark slate of the rest of the upperside, see